



News From

Maggie Brooks

Monroe County Executive

For Immediate Release

2005 State of the County Address

Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks

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Mr. President, Majority Leader Smith, Minority Leader Aldersley, Sheriff O'Flynn, County Clerk Dinolfo, Mayor Johnson, Chairman Minarik, Chairman Cook, distinguished guests, friends and fellow taxpayers...

Tonight, I'm here to report on the State of our County. As you know, this is the first State of the County Address that I will deliver. Tonight is a time for all of us to look back on the year that has come to a close. It's a time to take inventory of what we have done, together. And, most important, it's a time for us to look ahead, to chart the course for 2005 and beyond.

Together, we have accomplished a great deal. But one accomplishment stands-out above the rest. It's what most people talk about, most often. It's the new spirit of cooperation that we have established in County Government. It began a little more than one year ago with a mutually spontaneous gesture. But, that ice breaking embrace would not have meant very much, if Mayor Johnson and I hadn't followed it up with subsequent meetings, conversations and phone calls, and the understanding that we could reach out and run things by the other, whenever we felt the need. The Brooks-Johnson era in local government that we all hoped would follow, did. And, the cooperative and respectful tone that we have established is allowing us to work together for the betterment of our community.

Mayor Johnson, thank you for being here tonight, and for being a great community partner.

And this spirit -- this new attitude -- doesn't begin and end with City-County relations. It drives our interactions with our entire community, whether with individuals, groups, businesses or other governments.

Danny Wegman was asked recently what made the company that bears his family's name so successful and earned it the title of "Best Company to work for in America." This is what he said: "We just try to live by the Golden Rule. We treat people the way we would like to be treated, ourselves." Now, that perfectly sums up what I'm talking about.

This cooperative spirit allowed us to realize the aspiration that we set for ourselves one year ago, at the start of my Administration: *One Community... A New Beginning*.

My friends, after one year, with accomplishments in hand, with a clear vision for our future, and with a new spirit of cooperation that has been established in our community, I can stand before

you this evening and say confidently and very proudly that the state of our County has greatly improved.

Our Community was built, and is sustained by, an economy that is diverse, regaining its vibrancy, and on the move.

In fact, my first action as County Executive was to require that any company receiving county financial incentives must use local labor for new construction or expansion.

Last year, following-up on a recommendation from my Economic Development Strategy Team, Monroe County and the City of Rochester established a partnership with Greater Rochester Enterprise to streamline and strengthen our economic development efforts. This partnership has proven to be an early success.

I was proud to participate in the GRE sponsored Israeli Business Attraction Visit, here in Monroe County, last summer. And, in November, I traveled to Israel as a member of our Business Outreach Mission. As a result, two Israeli companies, Aliroo and e-Dent, decided to locate their U.S. headquarters in Rochester, New York.

And, I assure you, there will be more good news to come from our partnership with GRE.

In 2004, Monroe County approved financial incentives for 115 local businesses. That's an increase of 67% over 2003, due primarily to more companies taking advantage of our GreatRate and GreatRebate programs. The enhancements we made to the programs early in 2004, increasing the incentives when a company buys locally, are making a real, measurable difference. The resulting projects will create close to 1,000 new jobs and retain nearly 5,000 existing jobs.

Just last week, COMIDA – the County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency – approved a dozen projects that will invest millions of new dollars in our community, and create 171 new jobs.

I'd like to recognize several companies that have capitalized on the economic incentives we offer, to grow their businesses.

Last October, Monroe County partnered with Kodak to create a new revolving loan fund with Kodak's one million dollar contribution. John Richardson from Kodak is here tonight. John, we thank you, Chairman Dan Carp and everyone at Kodak for what you are doing to support local economic growth.

Century Mold was the first company to receive assistance under this new fund.

Century Mold is a full service molder that specializes in the automotive industry, specifically engine and related components. Century Mold parts are found in one out of every two vehicles produced in North America.

Monroe County provided a \$100,000 loan to assist Century Mold with the purchase of new equipment and the expansion of the company's operations in Rochester. The expansion will create a total of 50 new jobs in our community – that's a 25% increase in job growth for Century

Mold. And that's significant. And, the even better news is, the majority of those jobs have already been created. The company currently employs 240 people in Monroe County.

In the last 12 months, Century Mold invested three million dollars to significantly grow their operations here in Monroe County.

SenDEC Corporation, located in Fairport, specializes in high quality electronics design and manufacturing. They produce electronic circuit board assemblies for copiers, photographic equipment and MRIs, as well as confidential assemblies for our military. SenDEC also manufactures its own line of custom products which are sold to retailers such as Sears and privately labeled for companies like John Deere, Honda and Toro. They've been doing business in Monroe County for 27 years.

By offering the company sales and mortgage tax exemptions, coupled with the GreatRebate program, we were able to keep SenDEC Corporation in Monroe County, helping them move into a new 60,000 square foot facility, enabling them to sustain their growth.

As a result, SenDEC has tripled its manufacturing capacity and created 21 new jobs, bringing their total number of employees in Monroe County to 76. As part of the incentive package we offered, SenDEC agreed to create those new jobs within three years. But, do you know what? They created them in less than six months. And they're still hiring today.

You may recognize the name of the next company: Springwater Sprouts. They are hydroponic farmers in Honeoye Falls and grow the sprouts you buy at Wegmans and Tops.

Springwater Sprouts was founded 1976 as a cottage industry, producing alfalfa and bean sprouts without soil inside a family home. As revenues grew in the 1980s, the family constructed a four thousand square foot facility for their growing agribusiness.

This past year, with the assistance of COMIDA and the SBA 504 loan program, Springwater doubled the size of their facility, and will be growing from 14 to 18 employees. The company invested over \$260,000 in the new addition and \$50,000 in new equipment.

Please join me in recognizing the individuals behind these successful local companies: Ron Ricotta, President and CEO of Century Mold, and his wife Kelly; Ken Fiske, President and CEO of SenDEC, and his wife Barbara; and Bill Nies, the President of Springwater Sprouts, who is joined by his parents Bev and Herm, the company's Secretary and Vice President. Thank you all for joining us this evening, and thank you for your continued investment in Monroe County.

We will continue to pursue new and innovative ways to assist local companies in growing their operations and creating jobs. We know that an investment made in a local business is an investment made in our community.

We also know that a key component of economic development is connecting people with employers and available job opportunities – something we, as a county government, do everyday.

It is especially important to provide young people with the skills they need to find good jobs and to find them right here in Monroe County. Later this year, we will announce a new partnership

with the High Tech Business Council and Rochester Works that will train 14 to 18 year olds in emerging technology and link them with internship opportunities at local high tech companies.

I would like to recognize Matt Hurlbutt, Executive Director of Rochester Works for his efforts.

In November 2004, we officially opened the new Welfare-to-Work Center at our Department of Human Services office on St. Paul Street, in partnership with the Urban League and RochesterWorks. In less than three months, the Welfare-to-Work Center has already helped over 50 people find jobs and move from dependency to self-sufficiency.

And there will be more good news like this to come. Our Department of Human Services will be installing computer stations this year for clients to review job placement opportunities and access educational material.

It's because of innovative services and programs like these, coupled with effective case management, that we ended 2004 with a net reduction in the total Public Assistance caseload for three months in a row. This is the first time since 2001 that Monroe County experienced three consecutive months of net caseload reduction.

In addition to jobs, we must also continue to ensure that a wide range of housing options is available, so that everyone in our community has a place to call home. In 2004, we opened 114 affordable apartments for seniors on fixed incomes, and we have 56 units under construction for working families and individuals with special needs. And this year, we will seek to create even more options for families throughout our community to achieve the American Dream of home ownership.

Our Community expects its governments to adopt wise fiscal policies and budgets that meet the needs of residents while always being responsible to taxpayers.

2004 presented us with many significant challenges. Yet we faced them head-on. My first County Budget, which was approved by a bipartisan vote in December, is a balanced budget for 2005 that keeps faith with the taxpayers of our community by holding the property tax rate flat and maintaining services.

It was a victory for our entire community.

But make no mistake, if we do nothing else, and more important if New York State does nothing else, Monroe County will begin to face budget deficits again in 2006 which could result in a cumulative deficit of \$72 million by the end of 2007.

Mandated Medicaid spending, which increases by double digits each year, remains the largest single obstacle to long-term fiscal stability. The cost of supporting Medicaid mandates represents one third of each of our County tax bills, and this year when you look at your tax bill, we actually detail the amount that you, the taxpayer, will personally pay for Medicaid mandates.

We have been working with Governor Pataki and County Executives from across the State to find a solution to this growing challenge. The Governor's budget proposal, if enacted by the State Legislature, will provide real relief to Monroe County taxpayers, and taxpayers throughout the State of New York, by capping Medicaid expenditures at existing levels. The Governor's

proposal will cut our Medicaid costs in 2006 and 2007 by nearly \$40 million, and in 2008, the State will takeover the cost of Medicaid.

Notwithstanding the successful implementation of the Governor's proposal, the resources of our County government remain limited. That is why we must continue to rethink the everyday practices of the past and continue to think outside the box.

Our community has a proud and unparalleled history of leadership, and we welcome the challenges ahead as worthy of nothing less than our very best efforts.

And we must always remember, above and beyond these challenges, we have opportunities. It is up to us, working together as a community, to turn these opportunities into results.

In December, I announced the creation of the Center for Civic Entrepreneurship, a team of community and business leaders, who will help us analyze and implement many of the remaining 80 recommendations of our Budget Advisory Team.

I will work with them, along with my financial team, County department heads, and all of you, the taxpayers of our community, to keep Monroe County on the right track toward long-term fiscal stability.

Our Community is only as strong as our most vulnerable resident. The health of our community is important to all of us.

Last March, we launched the Monroe County Prescription Discount Program. Available to all Monroe County Seniors, age 50 and over, our program provides, FREE of cost, Monroe County-RxChoice prescription discount cards that can be used at any local pharmacy.

When we launched this program, we were told by experts in the industry that a good measure of success would be to enroll 5,000 seniors during the first year. Well, as of tonight, just 10 months into our program, we have enrolled over 12,000 individuals.

The success of this program is undisputed. It's helping seniors save money on their prescription drugs without having to purchase coverage and without having to go "north of the border."

So tonight, I am proud to announce that we will expand the Monroe County Prescription Discount Program by opening it to all residents of Monroe County, regardless of age, and regardless of income.

Expansion of our successful program will now provide real savings for everyone, especially hardworking families and lower income individuals -- those members of our community who find it most difficult to afford prescription drugs.

Lead Paint is another issue that should concern all of us. It is a pervasive problem that is still far too prevalent in certain areas of our community, especially in the City of Rochester. It contributes to a host of obstacles, involving health, learning and social behavior. Last year, I joined Mayor Johnson, our County Health Director, the United Way, the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning, and many of you at our community lead summit. There we pledged to do what each of us could to end lead poisoning in our community by the year 2010.

Monroe County committed to changing the standard we use to investigate properties suspected to contain lead hazards from the New York State standard to the more stringent HUD standard, a commitment which we have fulfilled.

In addition, we initiated a free eight-hour Lead Safe Work Practices training program, which 572 people successfully completed in 2004. In 2005, the County will continue to offer this course free of charge to homeowners and landlords.

The County also committed to develop a pilot program of lead safety assessments for properties rented to those receiving public assistance. We will launch our pilot in February. Over the course of three months, we will inspect housing units located in the six zip codes that have been identified as the most hazardous. And, tonight, I am proud to announce an enhancement to the pilot. When we identify a lead safety hazard, we will offer the property owner a grant up to \$3,500 to help clean it up.

Just as lead poses a serious threat to our children, breast cancer continues to claim new victims throughout our community each year. Most of us have a close friend, a relative or a loved one who has been diagnosed with breast cancer. While medical science has made great strides in the treatment of breast cancer, and more and more women have taken the steps necessary to reduce their risks and detect this disease in its early stages, far too many women fall victim to breast cancer each year.

Many believe that the commercial lawn care application of sprayed pesticides increases the risk of breast cancer.

As a County Government, New York State law gives us the authority to require that commercial pesticide applicators provide neighbors with 48-hour notification, prior to spraying the lawn of an adjoining property. As County Executive, one of the duties that I take very seriously is protecting the health and safety of our community. That is why, I will submit a Local Law that institutes this sensible requirement in Monroe County. I urge the County Legislature to approve my proposal, and once they approve it, I will sign it.

Let me introduce you to three remarkable women who are my inspiration for this law: County Legislator Mary Valerio; Holly Anderson; and, Mel Bianchi. They are each active in our community's Breast Cancer Coalition, they are passionate advocates, and they are each survivors. Mary, Holly and Mel, thank you.

Our Community recognizes the importance of a revitalized center city.

Working together, we are beginning to realize our vision of Renaissance Square.

As you know, Renaissance Square is the largest public works project our community has undertaken. It combines a transit center, a downtown campus for our community college and a performing arts center. By bringing these three unique components into a joint development project we are able to leverage federal transportation dollars for common infrastructure. In addition to the new jobs our project will create -- 1200 during peak construction -- Renaissance Square will open the doors to new business, retail and housing for our downtown.

In just one year, Renaissance Square has secured \$30 million in new State and Federal support. And, I would like to recognize the efforts of Governor Pataki, Congressman Reynolds and

Senator Nozzolio. This brings the total funding committed to \$128 million, putting us well on our way toward making Renaissance Square a reality.

More than 100 firms have responded to our request for proposals for architecture, design and engineering services. More than half of the respondents are local firms.

Contracts will be awarded in the next several months. We will then be able to put pen to paper, gain valuable citizen and community input, and all of us will begin to see the vision of Renaissance Square begin to take shape.

I'm proud that our Renaissance Square project partners are with us tonight: Mayor Johnson; MCC President Tom Flynn; RGRTA Executive Director Mark Aesch; and, Arts and Cultural Council President and CEO Sarah Lentini. Thank you all for the leadership that you have demonstrated in your enthusiastic support of this important community project.

Our Community is recognized throughout our state and nation for innovation and leadership in public safety and emergency preparedness. In fact, Monroe County was the first county in New York to have all of its law enforcement agencies accredited by the state.

Last year, we continued to strengthen the level of coordination and communication between public safety agencies and emergency responders in Monroe County. We secured funding for homeland security equipment and preparation, upgraded the 911 center, and successfully trained more than 100 citizen volunteers to assist first-responders.

Just yesterday, we further strengthened our emergency preparedness training by making it accessible to individuals from our area's deaf community. Monroe County's eight-week sign language interpreted course, which may be the first of its kind in the United States, is an innovative program that will enable deaf and hard of hearing residents to serve our community, as full participants of our emergency preparedness team.

And, because the analysis, handling and proper storage of crime scene evidence is so important to the successful prosecution of criminals, we formed a Crime Lab Advisory Team to evaluate our current needs and make recommendations for a new, state of the art facility.

Under the leadership of Sheriff Patrick O'Flynn, his office has enhanced its presence in our community and further strengthened partnerships with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. Working with suburban police departments, the Sheriff has streamlined investigative services and expanded technical and administrative support.

Sheriff, thanks for all you do to make our community a safer place.

We were all pleased when Governor Pataki selected Rochester to be New York's first Impact Community. We were also proud when Sheriff O'Flynn, the District Attorney's Office and our Probation Department joined forces with the RPD and the State Police to participate in joint patrols of high crime areas of the City. Operation Impact is making a difference and deserves our continued support if we are truly serious about liberating neighborhoods from the crime, drugs and violence which, if left undisrupted, have the potential of devastating our community.

Our Community places a great deal of trust in its public institutions -- a confidence that they will be governed ethically.

A few months ago, I called upon the public authorities in our community to adopt model governance and ethical guidelines, to ensure they are held to the highest possible standards of openness and accountability. To follow-up on these requirements, and to ensure that they are applied correctly, I will create an ethics watchdog who will monitor our public authorities and report directly to me. The Airport Authority, RGRTA, the Sports Authority and the Water Authority will jointly fund this new position, so no County tax dollars will be expended. My choice for this job is someone who many of you know, someone who is a man of integrity and beyond reproach, former Monroe County Attorney Chuck Turner.

Chuck, thank you for taking on this assignment.

Our Community is fortunate to have many outstanding attractions that enhance our quality of life and engage visitors.

The months ahead will be very exciting for two community attractions that Monroe County owns.

Our historic and beautifully restored Dentzel Carousel, located at Ontario Beach in Charlotte, is celebrating its 100th birthday this year. We are planning some special activities surrounding this unique occasion -- a true milestone for our community.

Monroe County's Seneca Park Zoo is consistently ranked as the number one family attraction in our community. And in a little more than a year from now, it's going to be better than ever! One of our elephants, Genny C., is going to have a baby! I'll have to admit, dealing with issues surrounding a pregnant pachyderm was the furthest thing from my mind as I took the oath as County Executive last January. But it is now one of the most exciting, and we are all optimistic that everything will continue to go well with the pregnancy of our first-time mother.

First, we know that when Genny C. gives birth in March of 2006, after her 22-month pregnancy, the excitement will spread throughout our community for young and old alike.

Second, Genny C.'s pregnancy was the catalyst for us to rally as one, and put together a plan that will build a new, more spacious exhibit for our elephants and enhance the visitor experience at the zoo. We did this by reaching out to all sides and agreeing on a plan, together. The result was a unanimous vote by the County Legislature to approve this project, and our community united behind it.

Over the last month, I have been approached by families and residents throughout our community asking how they could help. In the next few weeks, I will launch a grassroots community fundraising campaign to help build our elephants their new home. *Bucks for the Baby* will engage our community's assistance through the spirit of giving. No contribution will be too big or too small. From corporate checks to part of a child's allowance, anyone can participate. Let's all work together to welcome the new baby with a great place to call home.

Our Community provides a gateway to the world, serving residents and visitors, alike.

The Greater Rochester International Airport is an important partner in our economic development efforts. The Airport is responsible for 8,000 jobs and generates close to \$500 million annually for our local economy.

Very soon, we will unveil the new six-lane Central Security Checkpoint designed to make travel more efficient and convenient for passengers.

Over the next several months, we will unveil additional terminal improvements, from a new public viewing area to expanded concessions.

Our Airport has served as a national model for private screening and security initiatives. We've brought in new low fare carriers, expanded flight service, and we've experienced record growth.

Passenger boardings at the Airport for 2004 reached an all-time high – over 1.3 million passengers. This represents a 10% increase over 2003 and a 16% increase over 2002.

Our Community values and protects its environment.

With our landfill scheduled to receive a consistent stream of solid waste, it will now produce a steady volume of methane gas. This year, we will begin to harness the naturally produced methane and convert it into electricity. The environmentally responsible “green energy” that we generate will be available for us to sell and help promote economic development. Any way you look at it, it's good for our environment, and it's good for our community.

Thanks to John Graham, our County Environmental Services Director, Jeff Richardson, of Waste Management, and Riga Town Supervisor Tim Rowe for helping us make this a reality.

Our Community is on the cutting edge with technology.

County government can no longer afford to push technology improvements to the back burner. Up-to-date information technology, including computer hardware and software, data communications, telecommunications and e-government, is essential to help employees become more productive and more effectively serve our constituents. That's why I was so pleased when the County Legislature voted unanimously to approve my technology improvement strategy and build a strong IT foundation in County government for years to come.

Together, we will streamline and consolidate the County's core technology needs under one umbrella – a consortium of local and national technology experts.

Thanks to the leadership of Siemens and IBM, this consortium is a technological powerhouse that will soon be at work for Monroe County.

I would like to recognize Dan Lynch of Siemens Building Technologies for bringing the individual members of the consortium to the table. I would also like to thank Bob Samson, worldwide General Manager of IBM's Public Sector Team, for committing the global resources of this industry leader to our project, including IBM's 720 employee Data Center, located at Canal Ponds in Greece. Bob is in Hungary tonight but he is well represented by Steve Lafleche, Greg Cato and a number of other enthusiastic IBM team members. Thank you all for joining us.

The consortium will meet our current and future needs by providing new systems and equipment, and by keeping them modern, over time. This strategy also allows us to effectively plan and budget for technology, without surprises. Under our contract, we know exactly how much to budget for our core technology needs this year, next year and ten years from now. Our County

Information Services staff will manage the scope of this contract and ensure that the County gets what we pay for. The result will be County employees, across the board, who have access to current technology, increasing their efficiency and lowering our cost of providing services to the residents of our community.

And, no discussion of technology would be complete without recognizing the ongoing leadership of the Monroe County Clerk's Office. County Clerk Cheryl Dinolfo is adding 4.5 million pages of documents to the increasingly powerful On-Line Office, making public records more accessible than ever. Our County Clerk also received State-wide attention, as the first Clerk in New York to offer Certified Copies of Public Records via the Internet.

Cheryl, thank you for your leadership on this and so many other important issues.

Our Community is fortunate to have some very devoted public servants, many of whom are in this room with us tonight.

At the end of this year we will be saying farewell to ten Monroe County Legislators, as a result of term limits.

As you know, I began my elected service to Monroe County as a County Legislator, and I served along side each of these Legislators. They were, and they still are, my colleagues.

Please join me in recognizing each of these veteran legislators who between them will complete 181 years of service in the Monroe County Legislature at the end of this year: Peter McCann, 15 years; Mark Assini, 12 years; Fred Amato, 20 years; Lynda Garner Goldstein, 12 years; Mike Hanna, former Majority Leader, 23 years; Chris Wilmot, 10 years; Ronnie Thomas, former President of the Legislature, 22 years; Bill Benet, former Majority Leader, 27 years; Kevin Murray, former President of the Legislature and former Majority Leader, 27 years; and, Todd Bullard, former Minority Leader, 13 years.

Additionally, County Legislator Mitch Rowe, who was elected in 2001, has announced that he will be stepping down in March.

I can tell you very sincerely, although these individual Legislators may sit on opposite sides of an aisle in this room, no one can question their dedication to their constituents.

Let me add my personal thanks to each of you for your service to Monroe County.

We live in a great community. Can we be an even better community? Of course we can, and I've outlined some of my ideas that will help us do, just that.

There is no question that Monroe County, like other communities, will continue to face challenges in 2005 and beyond. As a result of the steps we've taken, I believe that we are in a much stronger position to handle the challenges that are ahead and more important, to take hold of the many opportunities that await us.

Communities are special places that become even more special when we all work together.

Let a better community be the goal we not only hope for, but strive for. Let a better community be the goal we not only dream about, but the one we achieve.

There is only so much, we, as individuals, can do alone. But what we can achieve together as one community is far greater.

After all, when we come together, and work together, our community is the beneficiary. And this should be important to all of us, because this is the place we all call home.

So, tonight, let's celebrate our achievements; let's look forward to the work that lies ahead of us; and, let's be proud of what we have become, in the last year: *One Community...Together Again!*

Thank you.